

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News

Taylor Complains From Prison / <i>The Owl</i>	Page 3
Arms Dealer 'Expelled' From Sierra Leone Amid Pending Legal Case / <i>Global Times</i>	Page 4
Salone Justice Suffers Big Setback / <i>The Democrat</i>	Pages 5-6

International News

Sierra Leone Expels Charles Taylor Ally / <i>Voice of America</i>	Pages 7-8
Liberia's Stockholm Syndrome - Why Bong County Still Loves Charles Talyor / <i>Think Africa Press</i>	Pages 9-11

The Owl

Wednesday, 7 August 2013

Taylor Complains From Prison

Detained ex-President Charles Taylor has written the African Union, complaining about the prison condition and the discrimination being meted out against him and other African detainees there, describing it as racist.

Taylor is currently appealing against his 50 years jail sentence at the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague at the ICC facility. If upheld, Taylor will serve his sentence in a UK prison.

Taylor says, European detainees are being given a more preferential and dignified treatment as compared to Africans at the International Criminal Court or ICC facility. "In this day and time in the heart of Europe, is it unreasonable to ask to be treated fairly and with dignity?

It is a damn shame that one has to fight for equal rights and dignity in a United Nations' facility." Taylor told AU leaders in his memo also copied to all detained persons.

Taylor's Memo to the AU dated May 29, 2013, a copy of which is in the possession of this paper, is said to be in the framework of Regulation 179-1 and 185-1 of the court's registry concerning room for private visit.

The memo is in response to one issued on May 28, 2013, by the ICC following an ICRC's visit at the facility that the Registry is faced with budgetary constraints.

However, Taylor complains that Europeans at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia or ICTY have a full size room for use during private visits, while Africans at the ICC have a tiny unfurnished cell for same purpose.

"The ICTY room is well furnished and set up in a dignified way with a bed and dignified environment with respect for

human dignity away from the legal and general family visit areas," he said.

"The fact of the matter is that the ICC has only two cells for all of its visiting programs. That includes, Legal visit, Private visits and Family visits," Taylor continued.

He said detained persons are confined to these two adjoining cells separated by a wall in which is affixed a large transparent glass sheet designed to see through and monitor the adjoining room. "The glass is now covered with a sheet of plywood or something equivalent in order for the cell to be used for private visits," he added.

He went on further to state that while confidentiality must be maintained, especially with legal matters, it has not been possible because whenever a legal or another family visit is going on in the adjoining room, one can hear discussions in the other room (private).

"...During family visits, the African families find themselves confined to a cell size room with their kids having nowhere to play for several hours, depending on the length of the visit; while the Europeans' families have a large hall where their children can play", Taylor bemoans.

He wonders while they (African detainees) have not been treated with the same sensibility and respect for human dignity provided the Europeans at the ICTY with whom they share the same building. Taylor said despite series of discussions with various ICC officials on the issue, much is yet to be done by authorities at the ICC to address the issue.

This 'We don't get for damn' attitude by the Registry is further indication of Racism in the system whether intentional or otherwise...It is there. Its ugly, violates the dignity of detained person and is WRONG", said Taylor.

Arms Dealer 'Expelled' From Sierra Leone Amid Pending Legal Case

By Associated Press.

Culled from Washington Post

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone - A Sierra Leone court on Monday issued an arrest warrant for one of the most notorious arms dealers of its brutal 11-year civil war, but a justice official later said the ally of imprisoned former Liberian President Charles Taylor had already been kicked out - raising Western fears he will never be tried.

Adding to the confusion, his native Senegal denied it had received him. Ibrahim Bah has been accused of arranging arms and diamond deals between Taylor and Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebel group, which has been accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, mutilation, amputation and forced abductions. Taylor received a 50-year sentence in May 2012 for supporting the rebels.

Judge Tonia Mbawa issued the warrant Monday after Bah didn't appear in court for a case brought by a private citizen on charges including kidnapping and assault. But Attorney General Frank Kargbo said Bah was "expelled" to Senegal in late July, despite pressure from rights groups and the United States to explore options for trying him in Sierra Leone.

Kargbo declined to provide details or give a reason for the decision. Sierra Leone's government has not pursued criminal charges against

Bah and the claim that he was expelled raised suspicions that the government was determined to avoid prosecution.

"With Bah's deportation, Sierra Leone has taken a real step backward on promoting justice for grave crimes committed the country's brutal civil conflict that ended in 2002," said Elisei Keppler, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch. "Sierra Leone has ignored the interests of victims who deserve to see those implicated in the worst abuses be investigated."

In the court case against Bah, the complainant, from the diamond-rich eastern district of Kono, said Bah kidnapped him, injured him and held him for multiple days against his will, while threatening to kill him in 2000. During the hearing, a lawyer for Bah said he was unreachable and that his cellphones had been switched off. Judges set a new court date for Aug. 15 even as one of the lawyers pursuing the case against Bah, Ronald Gidwani, expressed concern that he was no longer in the country. Officials took hours to say he had already been deported.

Senegal government spokesman Abdou Latif Coulibaly said late Monday that officials had no information on Bah. "The government of Senegal has received no notification concerning Ibrahim Bah," he said. "The interior minister has verified with all of the sections of the police,

and they have not received any information about this person."

Justice Minister Animata Toure said by text message that any reports about Bah having been sent to Senegal were "not true."

Taylor received a 50-year sentence in May 2012 for supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for "blood diamonds." Defense lawyers have disputed the allegations against Taylor, pointing out that Taylor did not physically travel to Sierra Leone.

But judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone found there was enough evidence to link Taylor to the crimes, and identified Bah as a "trusted emissary" who served as a liaison between Taylor and the rebels.

Bah was believed to be in Burkina Faso when he was placed under a U.N. travel ban in 2004, but U.N. experts located him in Freetown, the Sierra Leone capital, earlier this year. A report from the experts published May 31 this year included his Freetown address.

The case was being closely monitored by the United States, which provided tens of millions of dollars to support the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

On June 24, Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia wrote a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry asking that the State Department pressure Sierra Leone to pursue criminal pro-

ceedings against Bah.

The U.S. embassy in Sierra Leone has urged the government "to investigate the circumstances around Bah's presence in Sierra Leone and to take appropriate legal action," according to a July 2 response to Wolf's letter from Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Thomas B. Gibbons.

Bah was briefly detained in June but was released soon after, Gibbons said in his letter. Officials had confiscated his passport and were requiring him to report daily while the case was being reviewed, he said.

A trial of Bah in Sierra Leone would have provided important information on the trade of "blood diamonds" that fueled the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, said Alain Werner, a former prosecutor in the trial of Taylor and current director of Civitas Maxima, a network of lawyers and investigators building cases on behalf of victims of crimes under international law.

"If Ibrahim Bah was allowed to leave Sierra Leone, then this golden chance to see justice rendered to war victims in a local court of law in Freetown will have been missed, and this would be very unfortunate to say the least," Werner said. Corey-Boulet reported from Dakar, Senegal. Associated Press writer Babacar Dione contributed from Dakar.

The Democrat
Wednesday, 7 August 2013

Salone Justice Suffers Big Setback

Chief Justice:
Umu Tejan Jalloh



Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Frank Kargbo, has denied having knowledge of a court appearance due to have been made by Senegalese national, Ibrahim Ba or Baldeh past Monday, adding that it had no bearing on the decision to deport him.

Judge Tonia Mbawa issued an arrest warrant for Ba who is on a UN travel ban after he failed to appear in court.

"The government and Attorney General gave us their word that they would support us in this case. This is a bad day for justice," said Ibrahim Tommy, head of the Centre of Accountability and

deportation to his native Senegal on July 27.

"We do not need a reason," Sierra Leone's Controller of Immigration

Operations, Abdulai Timbo, said in response to a request from Reuters, for the grounds of his deportation. "The president

does not want him here. He is persona non grata."

Contd. Page 2

Rule of Law (CARL), which was supporting the plaintiff.

President Ernest Bai Koroma ordered Ba's

Salone Justice Suffers Big Setback

From Front Page

In an interview with Reuters at the weekend, Ba admitted supporting Taylor's rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) but denied dealing in weapons. He described himself as a "revolutionary brother" of RUF leader Foday Sankoh, who died in 2003 while awaiting trial for war crimes.

"I never bought or sold arms in my life. I fought alongside the NPFL but I never fought inside Sierra Leone a single minute," Ba said.

While Ba was not tried by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which the UN mandated with pursuing those most responsible for crimes during the war, groups including Human Rights Watch (HRW) had urged Sierra Leone to prosecute him in its own courts.

"Ba's deportation represents a real

step backward for Sierra Leone," Elise Keppler, associate international justice director at HRW, told Reuters.

"The government has in effect blocked the private prosecution against Ba and ignored the interests of victims who suffered heinous crimes in which (he) is implicated during the country's civil conflict," she said.

Sierra Leone deported an associate of former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, last week, sparing him a trial for crimes committed during the 1991-2002 civil war due to begin on Monday, to the dismay of human rights campaigners.

Ibrahim Ba has been named by United Nations experts as an intermediary for Taylor's arms deliveries to Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, who became notorious for us-

ing child soldiers and hacking off the limbs of civilians.

Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison last year by the UN-mandated Special Court for Sierra Leone for providing weapons and supplies to rebels who committed war crimes during the 11-year conflict in which more than 50,000 people died.

Ba has been subject to a UN travel ban and asset freeze since 2004 for his alleged links to arms and diamond trafficking but has avoided prosecution. He had been due to stand trial on Monday on charges including false imprisonment, kidnapping and assault in 2000 in Sierra Leone's diamond-rich Kono district, in a case brought by a private citizen with support from human rights campaigners.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 6 August 2013

Sierra Leone Expels Charles Taylor Ally

Robbie Corey-Boulet

DAKAR — Sierra Leone officials say they have deported a notorious arms dealer and ally of former Liberian President Charles Taylor who was facing criminal charges. But the whereabouts of the suspect, Ibrahim Bah, were unknown on Tuesday, as his native Senegal denied having received him.

Justice Minister Frank Kargbo did not confirm that Ibrahim Bah had been kicked out of the country until late on Monday, the same day a court in Freetown issued a warrant for his arrest.



Kargbo provided no details beyond saying that Bah was destined for Senegal.

Sierra Leone's rebel leader Foday Sankoh (2nd R) is flanked by senior aides at the formal opening in Lome, Togo of talks with his guerrilla field commanders and United Nations officials on ending Sierra Leone's civil war. Others (from left) are Sankoh's m

Bah faces charges including assault and kidnapping, stemming from a private complaint brought by a man in Sierra Leone's eastern Kono district. The man says Bah threatened to kill him and held him against his will for several days.

The private case was filed after it became clear that Sierra Leonean authorities had no interest in trying Bah, who United Nations experts discovered living in the country earlier this year. His whereabouts were unknown until the experts released their report in May. Bah has been under a U.N. travel ban since 2004.

Ibrahim Tommy, executive director for the Center for Accountability and Rule of Law in Freetown, said Sierra Leonean officials were never enthusiastic about the case and had indicated they would not help out with the private prosecution.

"They have told us from the get-go that they didn't have the resources, they didn't have the time to pursue justice on behalf of the victims of Kono district," said Tommy.

Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison last year after the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone found him guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor appearing in court at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Leidschendam, Jan. 22, 2013.

Although Bah was not charged by that court, he played a critical role in Taylor's crimes. Judges concluded that he was a "trusted emissary" of Taylor's who helped arrange arms and diamond transfers with rebels in Sierra Leone.

Human rights groups and other observers argued that a trial of Bah in Sierra Leone would allow the country to showcase how far its judiciary has come since the U.N. tribunal began work in the country.

Instead, Tommy said, the country's decision to deport Bah showed a failure of the judiciary to support victims of the country's 11-year conflict, which ended in 2002.

"We would've hoped that the government would support our efforts, would support the victims who have brought this matter against Ibrahim Bah," he said. "They have the right to justice. Ibrahim Bah must, we insist, he must have his day in court."

Human Rights Watch said that with Bah's deportation, Sierra Leone has "taken a real step backward on promoting justice for grave crimes."

Think Africa Press

Wednesday, 7 August 2013

Liberia's Stockholm Syndrome - Why Bong County Still Loves Charles Talyor

By Luciana Storelli-Castro

Gbarnga — In Bong County, the former heartland of support for Charles Taylor, Liberia's former president and warlord, a passing pehn-pehn (motorbike) throws up a cloud of dust in the orange-tinged afternoon sky. Apart from the occasional honk on the distant main road and the rustling of chickens searching for food, it is quiet outside the tin shack-turned-neighbourhood-bar where a group of women have gathered around a bottle of locally-distilled gin.

The owner of the makeshift bar looks on indifferently as Esther, Mary, and Marilyn take turns downing shots. An otherwise regular participant of this women's gathering, the bar owner is sitting this one out due to stomach illness. Meanwhile, her teenage daughter rotates sausage kebabs on a small grill and monitors the pot of water from my guesthouse, waiting for it to boil.

A warlord's reputation

I ask the women about the upcoming re-election campaign of Bong County's Senior Senator, Jewel Howard Taylor - the former president's ex-wife. In 2005, Jewel Taylor rode to power on the coattails of her ex-husband's continuing popularity in Bong County.

"She will win", says Esther without any signs of doubt. The other women nod their heads approvingly.

During Liberia's 14-year civil war, Charles Taylor's rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), used Gbarnga, the capital of Bong County, as its headquarters. And ten years after the Liberian civil war officially ended, and more than a year after Taylor was convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's civil war, he remains a popular figure in Gbarnga.

Reflecting the widespread solidarity with Taylor still found in the region, Esther maintains that instead of plunging Liberia into war, "he brought peace; he opened our eyes".

Tough to stomach peace on an empty belly

Throughout Taylor's reign, Gbarnga represented a modicum of tranquillity in an otherwise volatile and fragmented Liberia where competing rebel factions, vying for power and access to resources, roamed around the countryside, wreaking havoc and preying upon local populations. Although Taylor's NPFL was responsible for massive human rights violations, many residents say life in Gbarnga was more endurable during the war than it is now.

Arguments like 'peace can't run on an empty stomach' are used by many Liberians as rationalisations for the ongoing support for Taylor in vast swathes of the country. The cost of rice, the main staple in Liberia, was reportedly much lower in NPFL-occupied territories during the war than it is in present-day Liberia. Indeed, the NPFL's control of harbours and its seizure of ships importing food products during the war allowed for these artificially low costs.

However, what many beneficiaries of cheap rice during Taylor's insurrection fail to recognise - either as a result of a lack of information or wilful ignorance - is that while the NPFL's seizure of cargoes kept the prices low for their constituency in order to win its hearts and minds, it simultaneously served to cut off Monrovia's food supply, leaving the population there to starve. But, in Gbarnga, you don't bite the hand that feeds you - and Taylor fed a lot of people.

Ghankay's Ma

Charles Taylor is also known as 'Ghankay' in the region, an indigenous name he adopted for broader appeal among the indigenous population. And Esther's mother, still a fervent support of Taylor, is known throughout the community as "Ghankay's Ma".

Esther tells me that Ghankay's Ma was devastated by the verdict handed down by the SCSL last May. Judge Richard Lussick sentenced Taylor to 50 years in prison for his role in aiding, abetting, and planning "some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history". Ghankay's Ma considers the court's ruling an abomination and, according to Esther, has threatened to "beat" anyone who dares criticise Taylor in her presence.

Choosing my words carefully, I ask Esther whether she denies the well-documented atrocities committed by the NPFL during the war. To my dismay, Esther readily acknowledges that the NPFL was responsible for mass human rights violations but she absolves Taylor of any wrongdoing, insisting that it would have been impossible for him to exercise control over his troops' conduct at all times. Shockingly, she reveals that she even lost a brother to the NPFL. According to Esther, her brother had served as a senior NPFL official until he was ordered to be killed following allegations that he had leaked information to enemy forces.

Given that her brother belonged to Taylor's inner circle, Esther suspects that Taylor had a hand in plotting his death. But Esther's reverence for Taylor seems to take precedence over remorse for her brother. Suddenly, the infamous 1997 campaign slogan Taylor's supporters used to help him capture the presidency - "He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, I'll vote for him" - doesn't seem so shocking.

And it felt like a kiss

Esther believes that if Taylor were released from prison and flown back to Liberia tomorrow, the road stretching from Roberts International Airport to downtown Monrovia would be awash with people celebrating and lining up for a chance to greet him. Even as a market woman with little means, Esther says she too would make the sacrifice of travelling 3 hours on the pot-hole laden road to Monrovia in order to welcome the man she believes authorised the killing of her brother.

My mind drifts to the 1973 Stockholm bank holdup in which four hostages were forcibly detained for 131 hours by two machinegun-wielding criminals. After their ordeal, the hostages displayed a rare sense of affection towards their captors. The bond forged between the captors and their hostages was so strong that one of the hostages ended up getting engaged to one of the captors, while another hostage started a legal defence fund to help pay for the captors' legal fees. This perplexing phenomenon in which an abused person develops affections for his or her abuser was coined the "Stockholm Syndrome" by psychologists.

After the NPFL's ruthless campaign of pillage, arson, rape, torture, murder and all kinds of atrocities under Taylor's command, I start to wonder whether those who continue to revere Taylor have been afflicted with some version of Stockholm Syndrome.

I am tapped on the shoulder; my water has boiled. As I stand to take leave of the women's gin club, I ask Esther to extend my greetings to Ghankay's Ma. I secretly hope that Ghankay's Ma reads this article - just not in front of me.

Read the original of this report on the ThinkAfricaPress site.